

**"Man-on-the-Street", Washington, D.C., December 8, 1941**

**AFS 6358B**

**Location: "Negro billiard hall" on corner of 9th and U St.**

Philip Cohen: Yes sir.

Man: Mr. Interviewer, though let me clear one more to you.

Philip Cohen: Sure.

Man: Remember this, in all your speeches regardless of what American —

Philip Cohen: Give me a [light (?) ] will you?

Man: Certainly. Any part of the United States, any part of the world, a Negro, particularly American Negro, has always been a one hundred percent, two-three hundred percent too goddamned loyal to the American white man. Get this straight now. That's the American Negro language.

Don't forget this Negro . . . I don't give a damn who I'm talking to, you or anybody else. [*someone is talking to interviewee at same time he is speaking. It sounds like the interviewee's next few lines are directed to the unidentified speaker*]

You're not going to cut me off that just don't make sense. [*unintelligible due to noise in pool hall and many people talking at once*]

Unidentified Man: The kind of language you are using that's all I —

Man: Well, why don't you ??? I'm just talking to him. ???

Unidentified Man: You're ignorant, that's why I'm talking to you.

Man: See, because you don't understand what I'm talking . . . I'm talking God dammit like I'm talking to the world without you. Listen brother, whether or not ???, this is [removed], and incidentally I'm more patriotic than a whole lot of people, take it or leave it, understand what I mean? And as far as the defense of this country is concerned, it's my country.

Unidentified Man: I fought for this country.

Man: I have fought for it, will again. That's the sentiment of my sentiment and a whole lot of people I know. This fellow, is a different fellow, I guess. Piss on him.

But here's the idea [*question asked in background*] Yes. You don't never judge the colored population by no one corner or by no other place. You can go to New York and get a thousand different opinions. You understand what I mean? On different corners, you can go to Washington and get different opinions. I'm giving you firsthand of my opinion and I still say fuck him. You understand what I mean? That's why, piss on him sure, I'm talking to this man now. I'll talk to him in a minute [*someone laughs in background*].

But I was talking to Dixon over that goddamned [hookup (?)] You understand what I mean? Just my opinion. That's this. Anytime, there's never been, there's never been, there's never been in the annals of American history of a black man being a traitor. At no time. That's something to think about. White people have always been traitors. Benedict Arnold, God dammit from down in the Revolutionary War and all other wars, Civil War, they were traitors. But in any war, you can take this with you. But if — I don't give a damn. You've never seen a black traitor in your life. Not an American traitor. Trace history you'll find that out. A Negro has never been a traitor. Get what I mean? [*level of noise begins to increase, interviewee becomes unintelligible*].

Unidentified Man: Go ahead, go ahead.

Alan Lomax: Well, I hope this hasn't spoiled things for me. I'd like you to say what you've got to say about this. Tell me about your, what you do more or less and what your feeling about this war with Japan is. I mean your honest-to-God, heartfelt feeling about the whole thing.

Bricklayer: Did you want that broadcast?

Alan Lomax: No, it's just going on a record to be put away and kept for future generations. Whatever you've got to say and whatever is on your mind.

Bricklayer: Well, as far as my concerns, I'll tell you the truth about it. This country is really involved in war. Is that for broadcast? Taping it on there?

Alan Lomax: Yes. Just go right along, it's all right.

Bricklayer: I said as far as my concern, this country is involved in war and I think that we should be patriotic as citizens of the United States of America, regardless of creed, color, and condition. I think that we should put forth all efforts and helping the president of these United States of America to

do. We should do our utmost, you understand, in helping to wipe out that war that has started in the European countries, especially with Japan. I do think it has been an injustice in Japan's part and doing what she has really, has done. I will furthermore to say that I believe that's it's a stab in the back. And I hope that this country will wipe her off the face of the earth. That's much as I have to say about that. Now, you want my name, I guess?

Alan Lomax: When did you first hear about this thing yourself, yesterday? What were you doing when you heard about and what did you think then?

Bricklayer: Well, I was listening on the broadcast. I was at home . . . I live . . . 1856 H Street. But I was listening on the broadcast because I was anxious to hear just what was happening and when I heard that what had happened over in, where is the [air force (?)] base, where those fellows . . . where there was one hundred four soldiers that had got messed up [*unintelligible due to noise in pool hall*]. What's the name of this base that . . . I just can't recall just now. But anyhow when those soldiers [*interviewee begins talking much louder to combat noise in pool hall*], are being that they were asleep and they came over and bombed them like they did. I think it was an injustice, they should have been notified. Whether they are white, colored, or not, after all, they still human. And that's my belief. I think it is an injustice. To stab a man in the back as they did.

Alan Lomax: What do you think the reaction of the colored people, as a whole, is going to be as you see it?

Bricklayer: Well, from my standpoint of view, I think that the colored people, they are very patriotic as I foresaid and that they would do their utmost as far as that's concerned in ending the war. If they're going in as soldiers, I think they will fight to the last man. Fight with courage and fight for that in order that we should win the war. That's what all I have to say just now.

Alan Lomax: How long do you think it's going to take us to win the war?

Bricklayer: Well, I think it's going to be a long war. I think it's going to be a long war, myself. I think at least it will be about eighteen months or two years or something like that, I think the United States will be able to wipe Japan off the face of the earth. I think that, because see I think she is supreme. I feel that this country is supreme to all of the countries as far as that's concerned.

Alan Lomax: Do you think that will be the reaction of the Negro people?

Bricklayer: Oh, I know that will be the reaction far as my part's concerned because we have always been patriotic. We have always done our utmost as far as that concerned, for our white brothers

as far as that concerned. From the time of our fore-parents up to the present time, we appreciate our people, white people, we live ...together. And I believe, that as far as my part concerned that we will do all that we could. In fact, it's the way we've . . . I'd say we take it to the . . . this country from a traditional standpoint. We inherit that part that we should, that we like the white people because ... as far as my concern about it, I do think that the white people are our friends. I feel that way and I know that we are friend to the white man.

Alan Lomax: I believe so too.

Bricklayer: We are friend to the white man regardless of what might come about. I think that we will stand side by side as men and fight with them until the last man go down.

Alan Lomax: Thank you very much. Do you have something you'd like to tell us?

Writer: Yeah.

Philip Cohen: Can I have your name and what you do and —

Writer: Well, I work at the *Evening Star*. My name's [removed]. I live 12 . . . what is my address? 1621 12th Street, apartment 34. And I tell you what I feel about the war . . . they've been talking war long enough. And they've been talking long time when they should have been in it, the way I feel about it. If it had been left up to me they'd been fighting a year ago. When Hitler first started, they'd been fighting, see? They'd have stopped him before he got as far as he are. They'd have stopped him, in fact that's what I think this is come up to be, to stop him. And that's a good thing that this really started. I think.

As far as Japan's concerned, why just like he just said, it was a stab in the back. They started something that nobody else nobody going to start, you know. Japan was supposed to be here, supposed to have been talking peace to our president and they start the war over there. Well, I don't think it was no justice there at all, you know, and I think that also [*recording begins speeding up and renders Mr. Smith unintelligible*].

Alan Lomax: What do you think the Negro people would do if they had a chance to do everything they could do?

Writer: [*unintelligible due to speed of recording*] . . . I think that the Negro people would do their very best if they had a chance to do what they can. That they would do their very best to do what they can, see. But, if they have a chance to do it. All they want is a chance. Because they don't get a chance, that's the only reason they don't do. Because they really don't get a chance, see. But if they

get a chance, why I really think that they would do their very best, and especially if they all feel like I feel now.

Alan Lomax: That's fine, thank you very much. [*several voices talking in the background*]

What's your name?

Counter Boy: My name is [removed].

Alan Lomax: How old are you?

Counter Boy: I am sixteen years old.

Alan Lomax: What do you do, do you work yet?

Counter Boy: Yes. I'm a counter boy.

Alan Lomax: Where?

Counter Boy: At George's Lunchroom.

Alan Lomax: Well, tell me about when you first heard about this war and what you thought when you first heard it.

Counter Boy: When I first heard about the war I said to myself, I hope the United States will fight until the last man go down. In God, the Negroes trust that the United States will win this war, and have success after winning it. The Negro . . . we are many Negroes that are proud of United States and they will fight until the last man go down.

Alan Lomax: What do you think of this Japanese attack on the United States?

Counter Boy: The Japanese attack on the United States was a very low dirty trick. They should have warned. If they wanted to fight, why didn't they declare war and then start? Why should they come and . . . come in the back and start fighting without warning.

Alan Lomax: What do your friends think about this war? The kids your own age that you go around with? What do the girls say about it? Have you had any conversations with anybody who . . .  
[*uncertain as to whether Lomax is still talking. Conversation and laughter in the background*].

Unidentified Man: I say, he's only sixteen, he'll get all the girls when I'm gone. So don't ask him what the girls say. *[laughs]*. ???

Unidentified Man: Listen, tell me —

Unidentified Man: I say, he's only sixteen, he ??? be able to get all those girls after I'm gone, so don't ask him what the girls say *[laughs]*.

Counter Boy: Although, many Negroes' lives will be lost in the war as was before. And after this war, I hope the Negro, I hope the Negroes will have much more freedom than they have now.

Alan Lomax: ??? Would you like to say something? Cut just a minute, Jerry and I'll give you a warning.

Unidentified Man: What is this? Are we being broadcast? Where is this ???

Alan Lomax: This isn't a broadcast.

Unidentified Man: But where???

Alan Lomax: ???

Unidentified Man: I know.

Alan Lomax: I've got this truck out there and it's going on a big 16-inch record.

Unidentified Man: Oh, I thought it was being broadcast outside the hall. Out on the street ???

Alan Lomax: It's not being broadcast. It's going on a record, it's not being broadcast at all.

Unidentified Man: You've heard records . . . of a fella coming in with a record ???

Alan Lomax: It's going over a speaker, and —

Unidentified Man: But nobody is hearing this here, but us now?

Alan Lomax: No sir. No sir. This is confidential. Absolutely.

Unidentified Man: It's not on the air.

Alan Lomax: No sir. This is the honest reaction of people to this crisis. We're not publicizing it or anything else. It's history.

Unidentified Man: I understand that number. This is going on record.

Alan Lomax: That's right.

Unidentified Man: I thought that maybe, you know, the broadcast was being broadcast.

Alan Lomax: No, no. I'd like you to say something, and I'd like you to tell a little bit about what you think of Hitler and the Nazis —

Unidentified Man: And its relation?

Philip Cohen: Yeah and what's its relationship to you yourself. What its relationship to you as a young Negro boy and just coming off and looking for your opportunity in the world. What have you got to say?

Unemployed Man: Well, all I've got to say is that —

Philip Cohen: Give me your name and so on, forgive me.

Unemployed Man: — address too? My name is [removed]. I live 2277 H Street. And I'm not employed right now, but I was, I lost my job. All I've got to say is Japs did a dirty trick and I had a hunch that they'd start a war pretty soon. I think they . . . waited a long time just so they could get enough troops over there in Indochina or rather I say, somewhere near the base of Hawaii or either the Philippines Islands so they could make an attack over there. And they attacked suddenly without giving warning. I don't believe the Japs really wanted to start a war. I believe Hitler was behind all of it, forced them.

Alan Lomax: Well, what do you think the relationship is between Hitler and you? Hitler and the Negro people in the United States. What's your feeling about Nazi-ism and the Negro?

Unemployed Man: Well, I really think that Hitler is really afraid of the Negro people because of what happened in the last World War, and I don't think he was going to attack America unless he was sure of full aid behind him. I think that now since *[disc skips]* Japan has started war with her, well Hitler probably wouldn't declare war on us. I don't think Italy would have started anything right away.

Philip Cohen: They've already declared war, you know.

Unemployed Man: Italy has?

Philip Cohen: Yeah.

Unemployed Man: Italy declared war?

Philip Cohen: Do you think the Nazis are opposed to the Negro people as such?

Bricklayer: I'll answer that. Yes. I don't believe in Nazi-ism at all. I believe that Hitler, that Adolf Hitler, despise every blacks' face, every black face that the world has ever known as far as that's concerned. He's a real enemy to the Negro. That's my thought about it.

Unidentified man: ??? [*says something about the Jews*]

Bricklayer: The Jews and the Negroes, they don't mean nothing in Hitler's slate. He doesn't think anything about them. He thinks that they're nothing but a bunch of bums, that's all to it. And if he had his way with the Negro people of America, I believe he'd come here and annihilate the whole bunch.

Now, I am talking and you didn't get my name just a little while ago, speaker number one, but this name is [removed]. I'm just a ordinary bricklayer, I work daily for a salary around anyhow from twelve to fourteen dollars a day. That's my salary. And when I don't work, I don't have anything. When I work I have something. My occupation is bricklaying for the last fifty-seven years.

Now, I was here during the last war as far as that's concerned. I wasn't in Washington, the District of Columbia, but I was in Charleston, South Carolina. I was a foreman down on that big job that went up there. They put up a big building down there.